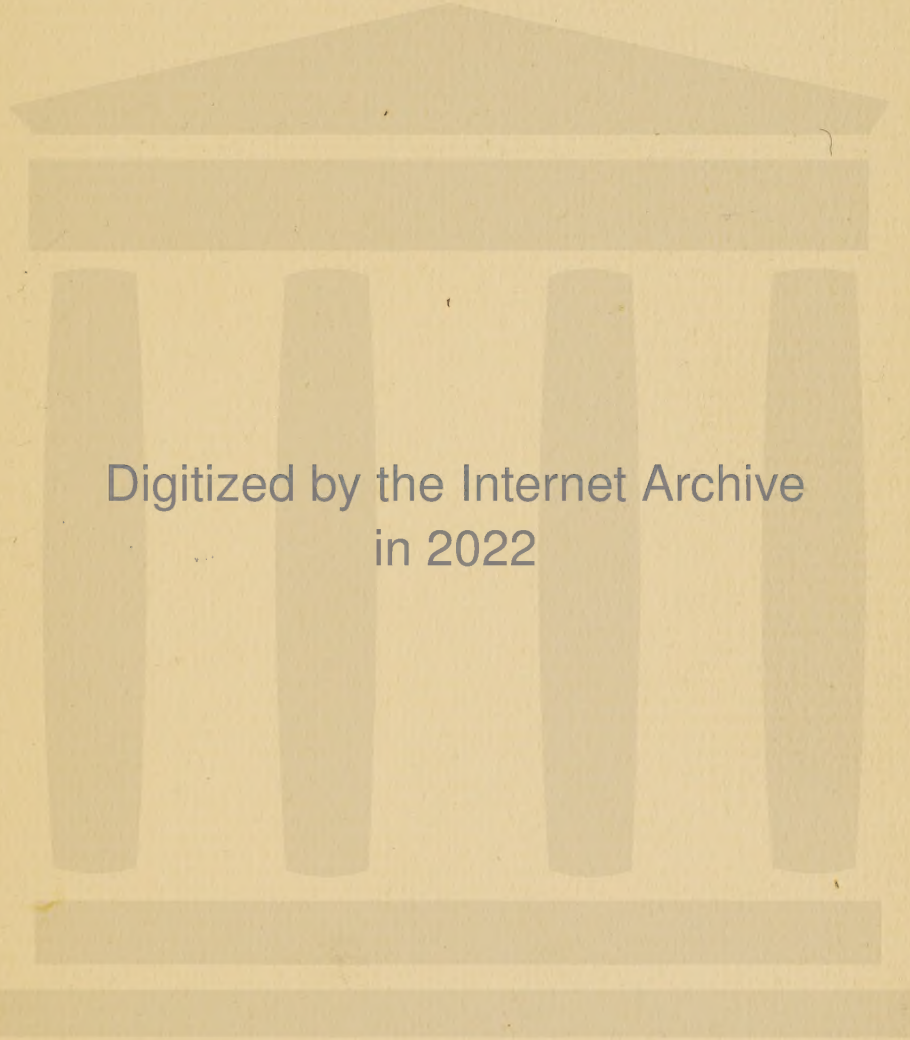


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Rustic Elegies



EDITH SITWELL



Rustic Elegies

By


Edith Sitwell

*Author of "Bucolic Comedies," "Troy Park,"
"The Sleeping Beauty," etc.*

With Frontispiece by William F. Matthews

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I

*Elegy on Dead Fashion*

Queen Venus' old historians seem like bees  
That suck their honey from the thick lime-trees.  
Behind their honeyed lattices all day  
As murmurous as thick-leaved lime-trees, they  
Dream cells of Time away in murmuring o'er  
The talk of little people gone before,  
Within their palaces until gold eves  
Bring them to windows in the tree-tops' leaves.

Manteaux espagnoles by the water's sheen  
Where trees resemble a great pelerine  
Are spread about the groups upon the lawns  
Smooth as an almond's husk or coat of fawns.

And cavaliers and ladies on the grass  
Watch Chloe and young Damon as they pass,—  
The shepherdess that runs from her swain's kiss  
Through leafy nets in a gown à l'Amadis

That rustles like the trembling evening  
Which falling on the lawns and brakes will bring  
Roucoulement of doves and veiled belles  
Preening their cloaks of cashmere tourterelles.



Oh, voices speaking by the waterfall!  
Heroic statues cast a shadow tall,  
And rustic faces where long water runs  
Are now transformed to gold five-petalled<sup>3</sup> suns.

But the historians murmur still like bees:  
“How old is Venus? older than the trees,  
Does she remember still the ancient bliss,  
Grown dead and rotten, of Adonis’ kiss?”

Through mulberry trees a candle’s thick gold thread,—  
So seems the summer sun to the sad Dead;  
That cackling candle’s loud cacophonies  
Will wake not Plato, Aristophanes,

For all their wisdom. There in the deep groves  
They must forget Olympus and their loves,  
Lying beneath the coldest flower we see  
On the young green-blooming strawberry.

The nymphs are dead like the great summer roses.  
Only an Abyssinian wind dozes;  
Cloyed with late honey are his dark wings’ sheens.  
Yet once on these lone crags nymphs bright as queens

Walked with elegant footsteps through light leaves  
Where only elegiac air now grieves,—  
For the light leaves are sere and whisper<sup>4</sup> dead  
Echoes of elegances lost and fled.

Queen Thetis wore pelisses of tissue  
Of marine blue or violet, or deep blue,  
Beside the softest flower-bells of the seas.  
In winter, under thick swan-bosomed trees

The colours most in favour were marine,  
Blue Louise, gris bois, grenate, myrtle green;  
Beside the ermine bells of the lorn foam—  
Those shivering flower-bells—nymphs light-footed roam

No more, nor walk within vast bear-furred woods  
Where cross owls mocked them from their leafy hoods,  
And once, the ermine leaves of the cold snow  
Seemed fashion leaves of eighty years ago.—

When first as thin as young Prince Jamie's plaid  
The tartan leaves upon the branches laid  
Showed feathered flowers as brown as any gannet  
And thin as January or as Janet,—

Chione, Cleopatra, Boreas' daughters  
Walked beside the stream's drake-plumaged waters  
In crinolines of plaided sarsanet,  
Scotch caps, where those drake-curling waters wet

Their elegant insteps.—Household nymphs must wear  
For humble tasks the ponceau gros d'hiver,—  
(Tisiphone the fury like a dire  
Wind raising up Balmoral towers of fire).



Another wind's small drum through thin leaves taps.  
And Venus' children wearing their Scotch caps  
Or a small toque Hongroise that is round-brimmed  
And with a wing from Venus' pigeons trimmed,

Run now with hoops and dolls they call "cher cœur,"  
Chase Cupid in his jacket artilleur,  
Play on the cliffs where like the goats' thick locks  
The coarse grass grows, and clamber on the rocks.

Above the forest, whence he shot the does,  
Was Jupiter's vast shooting-box of snows,—  
His blunderbuss's ancient repercussions  
Fired but pears and apples furred as Russians.

He threw his gun down and began to curse:  
When up ran Venus' children with their nurse:  
"See, Grandpapa, rocks like Balmoral's towers  
Held still these brown and gannet-plumaged flowers."

Then underneath the hairy and the bestial  
Skies of winter ripening, a celestial  
Bucolic comedy of subtle meaning  
Grew with rough summer suns, until with preening

Of soft bird-breasted leaves, again we knew  
The secret of how hell and heaven grew,  
Where walked great Jupiter, and like a peasant  
Shot the partridge, grouse, and hare, and pheasant.

In the gods' country park there was a farm  
Where all the gentle beasts came to no harm,  
Left to run wild. And there in that great wood  
Was Juno's dairy, cold as any bud

With milk and cream as sweet and thick as yellow  
Apricots and melons in the mellow  
Noon when dairy maids must bear it through  
Lanes full of trilling flowers and budding dew.

And then beside the swanskin pool where pansies  
And strawberries and other pretty fancies  
With the wild cherries sing their madrigals,  
The goddesses walked by the waterfalls.

But now beside the water's thin flower-bells  
No bustles seem rose castles and tourelles  
Beside the little lake that seems of thin  
And plumeless and too delicate swanskin,

Nor sparks and rays from calèche wheels that roll  
Mirror the haycocks with gilt rays like Sol  
Where trees seemed icebergs,—rose and green reflections  
Of the passing nymphs and their confections.—

In summer, when nymph Echo was serene  
On these lone crags walked many a beauteous queen  
As lovely as the light and spangled breeze  
Beside the caves and myrtle groves and trees.



One wood-nymph wore a deep black velvet bonnet  
With blackest ivy leaves for wreaths upon it,—  
Shading her face as lovely as the fountains  
While she descended from deep-wooded mountains

And with the wood-gods hiding, Charlottine,  
Boreas' daughter, wore a crinoline.  
So fair with water-flowing hair was she,—  
That crinoline would shine from crag and tree.

When the gold spangles on the water seen  
Were like the twanging of a mandoline  
And all the ripples were like ripest fruits  
That grow from the deep water's twisted roots

The water-nymph dark Mademoiselle Persane  
On blond sands wore an Algerine turbane.  
Of blue velours d'Afrique was the pelisse  
Of Grisi the ondine, and like the fleece

Of water gods or gold trees on the strand  
Her gold hair fell like fountains on the sand,—  
The thick gold sand beside the siren waves,—  
Like honey-cells those sands and fountain caves.

Dream of the picnics where trees sylvan wan  
Shaded our feasts of nightingale and swan  
With wines as plumed as birds of paradise  
Or Persian winds to drown the time that flies,—

When on the shaven ice-green grass one sees  
Roses and cherries and ripe strawberries  
Bobbing at our lips like scarlet fire  
Between the meshes of the light's gold wire,

And the bacchantes with their dew-wet hair  
Like velvety dark leaves of vineyards, wear  
Great bunchèd tufts of African red coral  
Whose glints with sheen of dew and leaves now quarrel.

Here in a sheep-thick shade of tree and root  
Nymphs nursed each fawn whose pretty golden foot  
Skipped there. They milk of flaxen lilies sip  
From a sweet cup that has a coral lip

In that green darkness; melons dark as caves  
Held thick gold honey for their fountain waves  
And there were gourds as wrinkled dark as Pan  
Or old Silenus,—figs whence jewels ran.

There in the forest through the green baize leaves  
Walked Artemis, and like the bound-up sheaves  
Of gilt and rustling-tressèd corn, her arrows  
Through greenhouses of vegetable marrows

She aimed; like the vast serres chaudes of the lake  
Those greenhouses her arrows then did break.  
Her dress was trimmed with straw; her hair streamed bright  
And glittering as topaz, chrysolite.



Among their castles of gold straw entwined  
With blackest ivy buds and leaves and lined  
With lambs' wool, and among the cocks of hay  
The satyrs danced the sheep-trot all the day

And sometimes stole a gherkin and a marrow,  
Some strawberries and a cucumber narrow  
Where the straw-coloured harsh leaves hid the root  
And only showed the scarlet glistening fruit.

In wooded gardens where the green baize leaves  
Hid fruit that rustled like Ceres' gilt sheaves  
They danced the galloppade and the mazurka,  
Cracoviak, cachucha, and the turka,

With Fauna and the country deities,  
Pan's love Eupheme, and the Hyades,—  
Phaola and Ambrosia and Eudora,  
Panope and Eupompe with great Flora,

Euryale, the Amazonian queen  
Whose gown is looped above the yellow sheen  
Of her bright yellow petticoat,—the breeze  
Strewed wild flowers on her straw hat through the trees,

And country nymphs with round straw hats deep-brimmed  
And at one side with pheasants' feathers trimmed,—  
With gowns of green mohair and high kid boots  
Wherewith they trample radish, strawberry roots.

But far are we from forests of our rest  
Where the wolf Nature from maternal breast  
Fed us with strong brown milk . . . those epochs gone,  
Our eyeless statues weep from blinded stone.

And far are we from the innocence of man,  
When Time's vast sculptures from rough dust began,  
And natural law and moral were but one,—  
Derived from the rich wisdom of the sun.

In those deep ages the most primitive  
And roughest and uncouthest shapes did live  
Knowing the memory of before their birth  
And their soul's life before this uncouth earth.

We could remember in that ancient time  
Of our primeval innocence, a clime  
Divined deep in the soul, in which the light  
Of suns gave radiant wisdom to our sight.

Now days like wild beasts desecrate each part  
Of that forgotten tomb that was our heart;  
There are more awful ruins hanging there  
Than those which hang and nod at empty air.

Yet still our soul keeps memories of that time  
In sylvan wildernesses,—our soul's prime  
Of wisdom, forests that were god's abode,  
And Saturn marching in the Dorian mode.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>This line was given me by a friend



But all the nymphs are dead. The sound of fountains  
Weeps swan-soft elegies to the deep mountains,—  
Repeats their laughter, mournful now and slow,  
To the dead nymph Echo. Long ago

Among the pallid roses' spangled sheens  
On these lone crags nymphs that were bright as queens  
Walked with elegant footsteps through light leaves  
Where now a dark-winged southern wind soft grieves,

So cloyed with honey he must close his wing.  
No ondine Grisi now may rise to sing,  
For the light leaves are sere and whisper dead  
Echoes of elegances lost and fled.

The nymphs are dead. And yet when spring begins  
The nation of the Dead must feel old sins  
Wake unremembering bones, eternal, old  
As Death. Oh, think how these must feel the cold

In the deep groves! But here these dead still walk  
As though they lived, and sigh awhile, and talk.  
O perfumed nosegay brought for noseless Death!  
This brightest myrrh can not perfume that breath.

The nymphs are dead. Syrinx and Dryope  
And that smooth nymph that changed into a tree.  
But though the shade, that Ethiopia, sees  
Their beauty make more bright its treasures,

Their amber blood in porphyry veins still grows  
Deep in the dark secret of the rose,  
Though dust are their bright temples in the heat,—  
The nymph Parthenope with golden feet.

My glittering fire has turned into a ghost,  
My rose is now cold amber and is lost.  
Yet from that fire you still could light the sun  
And from that amber, bee-winged motes would come;

Though grown from rocks and trees, dark as Saint Anne,  
The little nun-like leaves weep our small span  
And eyeless statues in the garden weep  
For Niobe who by the founts doth sleep,

In gardens of a fairy aristocracy  
That lead downhill to mountain peaks of sea  
Where people build like beavers on the sand  
Among life's common movements, understand

That Troy and Babylon were built with bricks.  
They engineer great wells into the Styx  
And build hotels upon the peaks of seas  
Where the small trivial Dead can sit and freeze.

Still ancient fanfares sound from mountain gorges  
Where once Prometheus lit enormous forges:  
“Debout les morts!” No key when the heart closes.  
The nymphs are dead like the great summer roses.



But Janet the old wood-god Janus' daughter,  
All January-thin and blond as water,  
Runs through the gardens, sees Europa ride  
Down to the great Swiss mountains of the tide,  
Though in the deep woods, budding violets  
And strawberries as round as triolets  
Beneath their swanskin leaves feel all alone. . . .  
The golden feet that crushed them now are gone.

Beside the Alps of sea, each crinoline  
Of muslin and of gauze and grenadine  
Sweeps by the Mendelssohnian waterfall,  
O'er beaver-smooth grass, by the castle wall,

Beside the thick mosaic of the leaves.  
Left by the glamour of some huger eves  
The thick gold spangles on those leaves are seen  
Like the sharp twanging of a mandoline.

And there, with Fortune, I too sit apart  
Feeling the jewel turn flower, the flower turn heart,  
Knowing not goddess's from beggar's bones,  
Nor all death's gulf between those semitones.

We who were proud and various as the wave,—  
What strange companions the unreasoning grave  
Will give us . . . wintry Prudence' empty skull  
May lie near that of Venus the dead trull!

There are great diamonds hidden in the mud  
Waiting Prometheus' fire and Time's vast flood.  
Wild glistening flowers that spring from these could know  
The secret of how hell and heaven grow.

But at a wayside station near the rock  
Where vast Prometheus lies, another bock  
Is brought by Ganymede . . . why dream the Flood  
Would save those diamonds hidden in the mud?

The farmer on his donkey now rides down  
The mountain side with angels' eggs the town  
Will buy beside the mountain peaks of sea  
And gardens of the fairy aristocracy,

And ladies in their carriages drive down  
The mountain to the gardens of the town,  
And the hot wind, that little Savoyard,  
Decked them with wild flowers à la montagnard.

The wood-nymphs Nettie, Alexandrine, tear  
Balmoral gowns made for this mountain wear,—  
White veils; each Fauchon emigré bonnet  
Bears coronets of berries wild upon it;

Huge as the great gold sun, each parasol  
That hides it; fluid zephyrs now extol  
Antiope's short bell-shaped pelerine  
Worn lest gauze ribbons of the rain be seen.



“Oh the blond hair of Fortune in the grove!  
Lean from your carriage, hold her lest she rove.”  
“Her face is winter, wrinkled, peaceless, mired,  
Black as the cave where Cerberus was sired.—

O soul, my Lazarus! There was a clime  
Deep in your tomb of flesh, defying time,  
When a god's soul played there, began to dance  
Deep in that tomb with divine deathless Chance.

But that huge god grew wearied of our game  
And all the lion-like waterfalls grew tame.  
Venus, a statue mouldering on the wall,  
Noseless and broken now, forgetting all

The fanfares, knows that Phœbus gilds her still  
On pastoral afternoons; but she is chill.  
Venus, you too have known the anguished cold,  
The crumbling years, the fear of growing old!

Here in this theatre of redistributions  
This old arena built for retributions  
We rose imperial from primeval slime  
Through architecture of our bones by Time;

Now night like lava flows without a chart  
From unremembering craters of the heart,  
Anguished with their dead fires.—Beneath the caves  
And crags the Numidean sibyl raves;

We hear the sibyl crying Prophecy.

'There where the kiss seems immortality  
I prophesy the Worm . . . there, in the kiss,  
He'll find his most imperial luxuries.' "

. . . . .  
Where mountains, millers' dusty bags, seem full  
Of Priam's gold and all the black sheep's wool  
Of thunderstorms, and grass in forests floats  
As green as Tyrolean peasants' petticoats,

Dead Venus drove in her barouche, her shawl  
As mauve as mountain distance covering all,  
As she swept o'er the plains with her postillions  
That were black and haughty as Castillians.

There high above the thickest forests were  
The steepest high-walled castles of the air;  
And paths led to those castles that were bordered  
With great gardens neat and walled and ordered

With rivers, feathered masks, and pots of peas  
Mournful beneath the vast and castled trees,  
Where gardeners clip the strange wind's glittering fleece.  
Oh, how that wind can blow through a pelisse!

Miss Ellen and Miss Harriet, the ondines,  
Bore baskets full of velvet nectarines  
And walnuts over wooden trellissed bridges  
That cross the streams and the steep mountain ridges.



They wore straw-coloured crinolines of faille  
Beneath their shady bonnets made of paille,—  
Their melancholy laughter ever sounds  
Through castled trees and over castle grounds.

But I am sad, and by the wrinkled lake  
Where the great mauve flowers will never wake,  
But drip with sleep and dew, I read this thin,  
Dry, withered book of delicate swanskin,

And find a tale of an Olympian glade  
Where Psyche has become a kitchenmaid;  
The world, that pitiful old catchpenny,  
Whines at her booth for pence, and finds too many,

Showing the gods no larger than ourselves  
Twittering bird-like from the rocky shelves  
Of this Olympus, and no prophecy  
They roar, but whisper triviality.

The ancient castle wall of Chaos nods.  
Through gaps of ruined air and withered pods  
A showman came; he smiles like Time and mocks  
Me, takes his marionettes from their small box,—

The gods, time-crumbled into marionettes.  
Death frays their ageless bodies, hunger frets  
Them, till at last, like us, they dance  
Upon the old dull string pulled now by Chance.

This is the game the apeish shuddering dust  
Plays for the market and the house of lust;  
There are a thousand deaths the spirit dies  
Unknown to the sad Dead that we despise.

Still ladies in their carriages drive down  
The mountain to the gardens of the town,  
And the hot wind, that little Savoyard,  
Decked them with wild flowers à la montagnard.

Rich as a tomb each dress! oh, pity these!  
I think the rich died young, and no one sees  
The young loved face show for a fading while  
Through that death-mask the sad and cynic smile.

. . . . .  
These living skeletons blown by the wind  
Were Cleopatra, Thais . . . age unkind  
Has shrunken them so feeble and so small  
That Death will never comfort them at all.

They are so poor they seem to have put by  
The outworn fashion of the flesh! They lie  
Naked and bare in their mortality  
Waiting for Death to warm them, childishly.

Do these Dead, shivering in their raggedness  
Of outworn flesh, know us more dead, and guess  
How day rolls down, that vast eternal stone,  
Shuts each in his accustomed grave, alone?



Round the eternal skeleton their dress  
Is rags, our mountain-high forgetfulness  
Through centuries is piled above the Dead,  
Waiting in vain for some remembered tread

Upon this rock-bound march that all we made  
To the eternal empire of the shade,—  
To the small sound of Time's drum in the heart.  
The sound they wait for dies, the steps depart.

Come not, O solemn and revengeful Dead,—  
Most loving Dead, from your eternal bed  
To meet this living ghost, lest you should keep  
Some memory of what I was, and weep.



## II

### *The Hambone and the Heart*

#### A GIRL SPEAKS:

Here in this great house in the barrack square  
The plump and heart-shaped flames all stare  
Like silver empty hearts in wayside shrines.  
No flame warms ever, shines,  
Nor may I ever tire.

Outside, the dust of all the dead  
Thick on the ground is spread  
Covering the tinsel flowers  
And pretty dove-quick hours,

Among the round leaves Cupid-small  
Upon the trees so wise and tall.  
O dust of all the dead, my heart has known  
That terrible Gehenna of the bone  
Deserted by the flesh—with Death alone!

Could we foretell the worm within the heart  
That holds the households and the parks of heaven,  
Could we foretell that land was only earth,  
Would it be worth the pain of death and birth,  
Would it be worth the soul from body riven?

For here, my sight, my sun, my sense,  
In my gown white as innocence  
I walked with you. Ah, that my sun  
Loved my heart less than carrion!

Like little pigeons small dove-breasted flowers  
Were cooing of far-off bird-footed showers,  
My coral neck was pink as any rose  
Or like the sweet pink honey-wax that grows  
Or the fresh coral beams of clear moonlight  
Where leaves like small doves flutter from our sight.

Beneath the twisted rose-boughs of the heat  
Our shadows walked like little foreigners,  
Like small unhappy children dressed in mourning.  
They listened by the serres chaudes waterfalls  
But could not understand what we were saying,  
Nor could we understand their whispered warning.—

There by the waterfalls we saw the Clown  
As tall as Heaven's golden town,  
And in his hands, a Heart, and a Hambone  
Pursued by loving vermin; but deserted, lone,  
The Heart cried to my own:



## THE HEART

Young girl, you dance and laugh to see  
The thing that I have come to be.  
Oh, once this heart was like your own.  
Go, pray that yours may turn to stone.

This is the murdered heart of one  
Who bore and loved an only son.  
For him, I worked away mine eyes,  
That my starved breast could still his cries.

My little lamb, of milk bereft . . .  
My heart was all that I had left.  
Ah, could I give thee this for food,  
My lamb, thou knowest that I would.

Yet lovely was the summer light  
Those days . . . I feel it through this night.  
Once Judas had a childish kiss,  
And still his mother knows but this.

He grew to manhood. Then one came  
False-hearted as Hell's blackest shame  
To steal my child from me, and thrust  
The soul I loved down to the dust.

Her hungry wicked lips were red  
As that dark blood my son's hand shed;  
Her eyes were black as Hell's own night;  
Her ice-cold breast was winter-white.

I had put by a little gold  
To bury me when I was cold.  
That fangèd wanton kiss to buy  
My son's love willed that I should die.

The gold was hid beneath my bed,—  
So little, and my weary head  
Was all the guard it had. They lie  
So quiet and still who soon must die.

He stole to kill me while I slept,  
The little son who never wept  
But that I kissed his tears away  
So fast, his weeping seemed but play.

So light his footfall. Yet I heard  
Its echo in my heart and stirred  
From out my weary sleep to see  
My child's face bending over me.

The wicked knife flashed serpent-wise,  
Yet I saw nothing but his eyes  
And heard one little word he said  
Go echoing down among the Dead.

. . . . .  
They say the Dead may never dream.  
But yet I heard my pierced heart scream  
His name within the dark. They lie  
Who say the Dead can ever die.

For in the grave I may not sleep  
For dreaming that I hear him weep.  
And in the dark, my dead hands grope  
In search of him. O barren hope!

I cannot draw his head to rest  
Deep down upon my wounded breast;  
He gave the breast that fed him well  
To suckle the small worms of Hell.

The little wicked thoughts that fed  
Upon the weary helpless Dead  
They whispered o'er my broken heart,—  
They struck their fangs deep in the smart.

The child she bore with bloody sweat  
And agony has paid his debt.  
Through that bleak face the stark winds play,  
The crows have chased his soul away,—

His body is a blackened rag  
Upon the tree,—a monstrous flag.  
Thus one worm to the other saith.  
Those slow mean servitors of Death

They chuckling said: Your soul grown blind  
With anguish, is the shrieking wind  
That blows the flame that never dies  
About his empty lidless eyes.



I tore them from my heart. I said:  
The life-blood that my son's hand shed—  
That from my broken heart outburst,  
I'd give again to quench his thirst.

He did no sin. But cold blind earth  
The body was that gave him birth.  
All mine, all mine the sin. The love  
I bore him was not deep enough.

#### THE GIRL

O crumbling Heart, I too, I too have known  
The terrible Gehenna of the bone  
Deserted by the flesh . . . I too have wept  
Through centuries like the deserted bone  
To all the dust of all the Dead to fill  
That place. . . . It would not be the dust I loved.

For underneath the lime-tree's golden town  
Of Heaven, where he stood, the tattered Clown  
Holding the screaming Heart and the Hambone,  
You saw the Clown's thick hambone, life-pink carrion.  
Old pigs, starved dogs, and long worms of the grave  
Were rooting at it, nosing at it there.  
Then you, my sun, left me and ran to it  
Through pigs, dogs, grave-worms' ramparted tall waves.

. . . . .

I know that I must soon have the long pang  
Of grave-worms in the heart. . . . You are so changed,  
How shall I know you from the other long  
Anguishing grave-worms? I can but foretell  
The worm where once the kiss clung, and that last less  
chasm-deep farewell.







### III

#### *Prelude to a Fairy Tale*

[ For H.R., to whom I owe much of the knowledge  
contained in this poem. ]

Clear as wysteria branches, waterfalls  
Droop by the lake; each flashing bright bird calls  
The names of beauties that have long passed by,—  
Still mirrored in that lake . . . a long-drawn sigh. . . .

Alas that Tamburini, Malibran, forsake  
These waterfalls . . . the serres chaudes of the lake  
Beside these cantatrice-like waterfalls  
See bunches of green grapes and leaves, with shawls

Of Spanish black lace; hooded belles are seen  
In the Phœbus and the Sultan pelerine,—  
All kinds of watered silks those great sprays wet,—  
The gros de Sidon, foulard pekinet,

And Chine de Syr the wind loves; trellises  
All gilded by the heat spangle the dresses  
With emerald grapes; like flashing water, thin  
Cashmere Alvandar and nacr   pekin

Show by the lake's clear temple and great domes  
In Venus' park where little Psyche roams.  
How like the Wall of China is that lake  
Reflecting Echo, but no sounds that wake!

And through the spreading branches of those grounds  
You hear no sound of hunting horn and hounds  
And see no stag. For no hounds ever bark  
And no hares gallop in that leafy park.

Bright as the grass where mandarin fish parch  
Seems that Great Wall of China's dome and arch,  
And drumming cascades sound of distant war  
From caverns and from Echo's haunts afar.

The little path was yellow as nankin  
And in the lake the small fish wave a fin.  
There in the dreamy park the palace stables  
Of Georgian architecture, steeples, gables,

Watched near the haycocks country nymphs' gowns float  
Looped over a bright yellow petticoat  
With leathern gaiters, and a carriage hat  
That has bewildered many a leathern bat

In barns; the wind, that little Savoyard,  
Decked them with wild flowers à la montagnard.  
They haymake 'mid the marrows' dogskin flowers  
And pumpkins where the dew now whines and cowers.

Came Master Cupid, knelt on the terrestrial  
Peaceful brink of that Empire Celestial  
The lake, and watched the small fish wave a fin,—  
He wore his first long trousers of nankin.

A fish came like a little merry boy,—  
He envied Master Cupid and his toy,—  
He envied Master Cupid and his game.  
The fish and the young prince were dressed the same,—

White nankin trousers and a flat Scotch bonnet,—  
A thin blue frilly coat,—gilt buttons on it.  
As a boy climbs in thick-leaved apple-trees  
Where leaves and fruit shake in a little breeze,

So Master Cupid watched his young friend shake  
The great blue leafy branches of the lake.

“This endless lake seems like the Wall of China,”  
He told his gaping friend,—“but larger, finer—

And bright as bluest grass where your life parches  
Seems that Great Wall of China’s domes and arches. . . .  
When you are grown-up, will you like the best,  
Like Vulcan, my papa, a velvet vest?”

“My uniform will then bear rows of stars  
To mimic the old grenadier god Mars,—  
With Nelson, Cæsar, Byron, and the rest.  
The drumming cascades then will suit me best.”



Just then, the lovely lake's vast park reflected  
Not at all what Cupid had expected.  
And Cupid ran to Vulcan: "O papa!  
Come quick! For I have seen Mars kiss Mama!"

Like Good Prince Albert's seemed the gushing hair  
Of Papa's bushed whiskers; resting there  
They seemed like fireworks at the Crystal Palace  
Exploding sharply without ire or malice.

Where a thick bush had hunting shades that bark  
At haymakers,—there in the dreamy park  
Papa sat sleeping where a shadow-hound  
Hunted a hare-quick dream, and ever drowned

In that set piece of firework whiskers, more  
And more each loud and partridge-whirring snore  
Blew the peaceful lake's park quite away  
With domes and temples, through the shining day,

Across the yellow nankin path, where cowers  
The whining dew in marrows' dogskin flowers.  
For like the dark earth, still Papa did keep  
A slow and weary, most terrestrial sleep.

But Cupid too was dreaming, could not wake.  
For this was but an echo that the lake  
Still held; for deep within his woodland cottage  
Mars waits for little Psyche with his pottage,—

That scullion Cinderella who now lives  
To take the honey from the straw-thatched hives  
Built by her bee-winged dreams, and mend the dress  
Of that old housekeeper, sour Usefulness.

By haycocks like the castles of gold straw  
For country satyrs, babyish leaves saw  
The little girl bear velvet cream and shining  
Buns from Venus' stillroom, where lies whining

The dew in flowers of pumpkin and of marrow  
Upon the little yellow path so narrow. . . .  
Until she reached the deep and bear-furred woods  
Where cross owls mocked her from their leafy hoods.

There underneath the thin and swanskin leaves  
Where pearlèd tears fall as a wood-god grieves,  
Hides still a strawberry or violet  
Budding small as a sweet triolet.

But Cinderella found the servants out  
And Marshall Mars loud-roaring with the gout  
And aiming his old rusted blunderbuss  
At nothing firing; with that martial fuss

Like Jove's the blunderbuss's repercussions  
Fired but pears and apples furred as Russians,—  
Hit but the candles' shadows,—children dressed  
In jangling bright clothes,—so they join the blessed.

Mars cried; "The pirate ships have brought me home  
And this damned gout will never let me roam.

Like Windsor Castle towered the thick-walled waves  
(Enclosing gardens)—country inns seemed caves

Where Mr. Pitt attired as Charley Wagg<sup>1</sup>  
Began to dance and roar, began to brag  
Of herring-silver harp-wires, waves that seem  
Like sunburn haycocks in a summer dream,

Or satyrs' castles of gold straw entwined  
With blackest ivy buds and leaves and lined  
With lambs' wool, and amid those cocks of hay  
The sirens play their harp-strings through the day

And mariners dance jigs, mazarinettes  
And hornpipes, with the quickest coucoulettes,  
The tarantella and the rigodoo,  
The pas de Calais, blues, and the fazoon,

The schottische, prairie hunch, and the sheep-trot,  
Among those haycocks, caring not a jot,  
While the harps' herring-silver jangling sound  
Makes them forget that they are dead and drowned,

And on lone crags nymphs bright as any queen  
In crinolines of tarlatine marine  
Walk where a few gauze tartan thin leaves grow  
Among the ermine leaves of the cold snow.

<sup>1</sup>See note at end of book



All this is now beyond my furthest reach.  
I'll poke the fires tall fort and make a breach,"  
Mars said: the blunderbuss' repercussions  
Fired out pears and apples furred as Russians.

"But what has the fire given me  
From its castellated town  
With all that crackling martial fuss?  
A shadow like a pony, brown  
And shaggy, grumbling like a bear,  
For me to ride to Anywhere,—  
Quebec or Carolina, Greece,  
Windsor Castle, Cannes, or Nice.  
But when the candles 'gin to wink  
That are jangling tinsel pink  
As the rosebuds, quickly dare  
Fresh shadows, come like children dressed  
In jangling bright clothes, Sunday best.  
What's the use of that to me?"

And saying that, the Marshal banged his door  
With a war's rumours, rumbling o'er the floor.  
The angry sound then reached the maid, now fain  
To seek Queen Venus' palace once again

Beside the swanskin pool where roses, pansies  
And strawberries and other pretty fancies  
With cherries and ripe plums sing madrigals  
In the green summer to the waterfalls.

Then through the distance royal-blue as Punch's  
Coachman's coat she stared; there float, for bunches  
Of marigolds and zinnias, double daisies,  
The country inns where traveller Time lazies,

And drinking there the bright and foxy beer  
The gods like peasants with a drunken cheer  
Danced the polka and the polonaise  
Where like the haycocks seemed the sun's gold rays.

The little bee-winged motes of afternoon  
Make God in their own image, fainting soon  
In darkness; and the bee within her hive  
Thinks that in golden cells her god must live.

The dog creates a god that still can scent  
A quarry; and the peaceful cattle lent  
To God their browsing image; so the peasants'  
Gods must reap the corn and shoot the pheasants.

These are the songs that Cinderella hears  
Walking through leaves like chestnut horses' ears.  
Mars' black and bristling dog like Cerberus  
Still followed her and frisked and made a fuss.

NEPTUNE

(*Polka*)

“ ‘Tra la la la—

See me dance the polka,’

Said Mr. Wagg like a bear,

‘With my top hat

And my whiskers that—

(Tra la la la) trap the Fair.

Where the waves seem chiming haycocks

I dance the polka; there

Stand Venus’ children in their gay frocks,—

Maroon and marine,—and stare

To see me fire my pistol

Through the distance blue as my coat;

Like Wellington, Byron, the Marquis of Bristol,

Buzbied great trees float.

While the wheezing hurdy-gurdy

Of the marine wind blows me

To the tune of Annie Rooney, sturdy,

Over the sheafs of sea;

And bright as a seedsman’s packet

With zinnias, candytufts chill

Is Mrs. Marigold’s jacket

As she gapes at the inn’s door still



Where at dawn in the box of the sailor  
Blue as the decks of the sea,  
Nelson awoke, crowed like the cocks,  
Then back to dust sank he.

And Robinson Crusoe  
Rues so  
The bright and foxy beer,—  
But he finds fresh isles in a negress' smiles,—  
The poxy doxy dear,

As they watch me dance the polka,'  
Said Mr. Wagg like a bear,  
'In my top hat and my whiskers that,—  
Tra la la la, trap the Fair.

Tra la la la la—  
Tra la la la la—  
Tra la la la la la la la

La  
La  
La! ”



PLUTO

(*Mazurka*)

“God Pluto is a kindly man; the children ran:  
‘Come help us with the games our dames ban.’  
He drinks his beer and builds his forge, as red as George  
The Fourth his face is that the flames tan.  
Like baskets of ripe fruit the bird-songs’ oaten flutes  
All honeyed yellow sound in air, where  
Among the hairy leaves fall trills of dew and sheaves  
Are tasting of fresh green anew. Flare  
His flames as tall  
As Windsor Castle, all  
Balmoral was not higher.  
Like feathered masks and peas in pots and castled trees  
Walled gardens of the seas, the flames seemed all of these.  
As red and green as  
Petticoats of queans  
Among the flowering  
Beans they  
Bloom. . . . ‘Come rest and be!  
I care for nobody, not I, the world can be,—and no one  
cares for me!’  
In the lane, Hattie,  
Meddlesome Mattie,  
Suddenly quarrel.  
Flames like Balmoral

From feathered doxies  
Blow up like boxes  
Cram full of matches,—  
Each yells and scratches.  
Flames green and yellow spirt from lips and eyes and skirt,  
The leaves like chestnut horses' ears rear.  
Ladies, though my forge has made me red as George  
The Fourth, such flames we know not here, dear!"

## CENTAURS AND CENTAURESSES

### *(Yodelling Song)*<sup>1</sup>

“We bear velvet cream.  
Green and babyish  
Small leaves seem; each stream  
Horses’ tails that swish,

And the chimes remind  
Us of sweet birds singing  
Like the jangling bells  
On rose trees ringing.

Man must say farewell  
To parents now  
And to William Tell  
And Mrs. Cow.

Man must say farewells  
To storks and Bettes  
And to roses’ bells  
And statuettes.

Forests white and black  
In spring are blue  
With forget-me-nots,  
And to lovers true

<sup>1</sup>See note at end of book



Still the sweet bird begs  
And tries to cozen  
Them: 'Buy angels' eggs  
Sold by the dozen.'

Gone are clouds like inns  
On the gardens' brinks  
And the mountain djinns,—  
Ganymede sells drinks

While the days seem grey  
And his heart of ice  
Grey as chamois or  
The edelweiss,

And the mountain streams  
Like cowbells sound—  
Tirra lirra, drowned  
In the waiter's dreams

Who has gone beyond  
The forest waves  
While his true and fond  
Ones seek their graves."

## ONDINES

“Here we go gathering nuts and may  
Though the blond fleeced water flows away  
Like youth,—help Venus’ step-daughter  
Beneath the sheep-fleeced trees with water.  
Through the rose-leaves green as rocks  
We found the wooden pump’s thin box  
And in that crystal cold  
Limpidity sighing,  
Like the rose’s sorrowful dark heart  
Darkness is lying.  
The wooden pump is like a box,  
And somebody is lying there,  
A princess with her long black hair,—  
Someone is sighing.  
Through rose-buds bright pink as a candle  
We brushed to touch the pump handle  
Through leaves as green as rocks;  
And from the pump’s thin wooden spout  
The jangling water-drops came out,  
Through tinsel-pink thin petals frilled  
Of marsh mallows limp and chilled,  
And grew not old—  
Flowering apart.  
Oh, someone is crying.”

## PROSERPINE

“Hell’s flames seem flowering rows of beans  
As red as petticoats of queans;  
They prick and scratch like bees and bears  
And poverty and prickly pears.

Old women whine, old women stoop  
From hovels low as a hen-coop;  
The devil in his fouled night-shirt  
Finds nothing there but plumes and dirt.

Hark not the sweet bird that begs,—  
Buy not ever angels’ eggs  
Nor let one in a ragged gown  
Buy, destroy, your heart’s walled town.

There is a witch who can destroy  
Paris and the towers of Troy;  
But she can live: black cruelty  
May only seize on Poverty.

A widow lived in poverty  
In that glittering wood you see;  
Black and ghastly was her face,  
Bearded like a goat . . . disgrace

She brought, slew Anne as white as snow  
Or flowers that on dark branches grow.—  
One winter day, Anne tried to tame  
The green and yellow coxcomb flame:

'If you, sweet bird, will sing and grow,  
I'll dig for you in the cold snow  
And find for you a ruby berry  
Sweet and sparkling as a cherry.'

The feathered fire was cross instead  
And sulky,—lazy slug-a-bed.  
Still it was dark, and stars outside  
Shook their bright fleeces through the wide

Deep window . . . she must sweep the floor  
Then seek the forest well for more  
Clear water, though the winds will prowl  
Through those dark trees, will pounce and howl.

Then through the door the old witch crept.  
'My pretty one, I thought you slept.'  
Her dress was rustling like bunched leaves.  
'A hole is in my bucket,' grieves

The witch. . . . They walked across the snow  
Where the dark winds ever go,  
Snuffling beast-like, try to wreak  
Their rage, or peck Anne's snow-clear cheek.

They reached the forest well at morn.  
As soft as young blades of the corn  
Was the clear well-water.  
The witch said, 'Draw me some, my daughter.'



From the water's deepest roots  
She drew ripples soft as fruits,  
Cold as snow; and like a bird  
The old crone drank; the maid then heard

The soft snows ruffle up each feather,  
Very angry, shrill together;  
With cold bird-tongues across the plain  
They hunted the old witch again.

When they reached the witch's door  
Something rustled on the floor:  
A black man hotter than a coal  
Crept in through a glittering hole

Near the window . . . all the shade  
Grew furred and black, a purring made.  
And little Anne as white as snow  
Screamed like a bird and tried to go.

The witch grows angry, pinches, scratches,  
Then blows up like a box of matches  
With green and yellow flames that spirt  
From lips and eyes and hands and skirt,—

Then grows calmer once again.  
'Ere across the snowy plain  
You must go, my dear, I'll give  
This to please you while you live.'

She brought two apples harsh and cold. . . .  
They were glittering like the air,  
They were like the crowns of gold  
Cannibal black kings do wear;

The coldest snows were far less dire,—  
For ever since that gift of wicked  
Doll, Anne melts within a thicket  
Of thorns that glitter like a fire.

And snow-white Anne melts quite away. . . .  
The other women find a thorn  
In their fingers. . . . Doll did slay  
With pins in wax, a babe new-born.

Before the Justice then they took  
The witch. 'Go, in her chimney nook,  
William Thick and William Read  
You must watch all night and heed.'

In her crannied honied wall  
Many a strange flower bright and tall  
Grew; the shades sang like a wren  
Or speckled thrushes, dancing then. . . .

At three o'clock in the clear morning  
Suddenly without a warning  
Very strangely shook her hair.  
It shone as bright as fire, and there

A glittering bright fly like a miller  
Then came flying from her poll,  
And it shone as bright as siller.  
Like a rag-doll there lay Doll

Moaning; then she did confess  
As they tweaked her, tore her dress,—  
'My Familiar sucks my poll  
Like a fly, and gives poor Doll

Devil's Silver.' That is why  
Doll must hang until she die. . . .  
In green baize forests in the park  
Hunts Dian; doe-smooth hounds that bark

Run like waterfalls, and find  
Never rabbit, doe, or hind.  
Great red and white bird-glossy flowers  
Sing like birds in spring's quick showers

Among dark glittering leaves, have names  
Of Venus' damsels and dead shames,—  
Alaciel or Arrhinoe. . . .

There Dian's buskined damsel Chloe

Finds that ventriloquist's old doll  
From rhododendron boughs doth loll,  
Where roses seem to foresters  
The heavenly chapel's choristers."

Then a sylph came with bird-soft feathered feet,  
Pecked at the fruits and found them honey-sweet.

### THE SYLPH

“The cornucopia of Ceres  
I seek not, fading not for these,  
But fair Pomona, gardener’s daughter,  
Laughing like bird-feathered water.

Amid this hot green glowing gloom  
A word falls with a rain-drop’s boom;

And baskets of ripe fruit in air  
The bird-songs seem, suspended where

Those goldfinches the ripe warm lights  
Peck slyly at them, take quick flights.

I bring you branches green with dew  
And fruits that you may crown anew

Your waspish-gilded hair until  
That cornucopia doth spill

Dew, and your warm lips bear the stains  
And bird-blood leap within your veins.

Pomona, lovely gardener’s daughter,  
Fruits like ripples of the water



Soon will fade . . . then leave your fruits,  
Smooth as your cheek or the birds' flutes,  
And in this lovelier smoother shade  
Listen to my serenade."

Clear then as Ariel or the light that grew  
In eastern quarries ripening precious dew<sup>1</sup>  
A second sylph came, and the trees' vast waterfalls  
Echoed this water-dripping song like flashing bright  
    bird-calls,  
To country nymphs who vanished like the motes  
That Phœbus spreads among the glittering leaves  
Bound like the richest sheaves,  
And only live now in the dark voice of the country  
    nightingale  
That still for rustic nymphs among the bunchèd leaves  
    doth wail.

<sup>1</sup>"Annus Mirabilis." Dryden.

## SECOND SYLPH

“Daisy and Lily,  
Lazy and silly,  
Walk by the shore of the wan grassy sea,—  
Talking once more 'neath a swan-bosomed tree.  
Rose castles,  
Tourelles,  
Those bustles  
Where swells  
Each foam-bell of ermine,  
They roam and determine  
What fashions have been and what fashions will be,—  
What tartan leaves born,  
What crinolines worn.  
By Queen Thetis,  
Pelisses  
Of tarlatine blue  
Like the thin plaided leaves that the castle crags grew,  
Or velours d'Afrande:  
On the water-gods' land  
Her hair seemed gold trees on the honey-cell sand  
When the thickest gold spangles on deep waters seen  
Were like twanging guitar and like cold mandoline,  
And the nymphs of great caves  
With hair like gold waves  
Of Venus, wore tarlatine.

Louise and Charlottine  
(Boreas' daughters)  
And the nymphs of deep waters,  
The nymph Taglioni, Grisi the ondine,  
Wore plaided Victoria and thin Clementine  
Like the crinolined waterfalls;  
Wood-nymphs wore bonnets, shawls,  
Elegant parasols  
Floating were seen.  
The Amazons wear balzarine of jonquille  
Beside the blond lace of a deep-falling rill.  
Through glades like a nun  
They run from and shun  
The enormous and gold-rayed rustling sun.  
And the nymphs of the fountains  
Descend from the mountains  
Like elegant willows  
On their deep barouche pillows  
In cashmere Alvandar, barège Isabelle,  
Like bells of bright water from clearest woodwell.  
Our élégantes favouring bonnets of blond,  
The stars in their apiaries,  
Sylphs in their aviaries,  
Seeing them, spangle these, and the sylphs fond  
From their aviaries fanned  
With each long fluid hand  
The manteaux espagnoles,



Mimic the waterfalls  
Over the long and the light summer land.

. . . . .

So Daisy and Lily,  
Lazy and silly,  
Walk by the shore of the wan grassy sea,  
Talking once more 'neath a swan-bosomed tree.  
Rose castles,  
Tourelles,  
Those bustles!  
Mourelles  
Of the shade in their train follow.  
Ladies, how vain,—hollow,—  
Gone is the sweet swallow,—  
Gone, Philomel!"

Where in the forest by each darkest root  
The nymphs walked like a fawn whose golden foot  
Fears not the darkness,—in that deepest shade  
An older goddess in the earth is laid.

Where late the snow slipped down like gilded myrrh  
Where the sharp-scented rose-boughs, rose-roots stir,  
Beside the goddess' golden body lay  
Like winter's wrinkled image, stone-bound, grey,

The negro Death . . . the first dark shadow slant  
Before that growth the seven-leaved man-plant,  
And conscious only of the monkey-hair  
On the awakening flower-bells growing there.

Flower-bells drip dew like topazes, and sprigs  
Of amber bud upon the tendrils, twigs,  
The plants yield starry milk that is as bright  
As Cassiopeia's milk in the spring light.

Then with vast plumes from ancient helmets blown  
The water's fanfares sound from blinded stone,  
As the rich life begins from stone and mould  
After the long frost and the winter's cold:

“Fear not my wrinkled and my cynic smile:  
That winter held a god's soul all the while,—  
As when at first the blinded deafened stone  
Became transformed to plant, and not alone,

For love's first shadow fell when stone once lost  
In sleep, delivered from that springless frost  
Became a plant, evolved through many forms  
And knew the growing dream of spring, the storms

Of light, and then became a golden beast:  
For this is the first shadow and the least,  
Of man,—then man grew spirit from that clod  
Of earth,—the spirit grew into a god.

My stone is plant, my hot lion honey-sweet,  
My frost melts in your sun, and at your feet  
I pour my songs as Africa its gold  
From rivers of my heart that were most cold.

Think of the miracle of poetry,—birth  
Of jangling water from the darkest earth.  
The rose-tree cannot tell us how it grows  
From leafless wood, that heaven's shade the rose.

Sometimes the songs which may appear most strange  
Are of the growth of consciousness,—the range  
Of consciousness awakening from sleep,—  
As chlorophyll that sleeps in green woods deep.

Sometimes you find a darkened consciousness  
Like that of a blind person's fumbling guess  
Intensely then aware, for the first time,  
Of a tree's primal nature, flower, or rime,

Or of the way in which rain hangs or sprawls  
From trees that are as vast as waterfalls  
Till from that nature you may guess the reason,  
Design, beyond the birth and death of season.

There is a terrible groping animal  
Consciousness that lumbers to appal  
The heart . . . this only knows the flowering dire  
And urge of its hot blood and earth desire,

And through this, its relationship to other  
Material aspects of the world its mother,—  
The dark earth purring in its sleep; again  
The bestial consciousness that knows the pain

Of its own segregation, loneliness,  
Because the lack of higher consciousness  
Has cut it off from the vast outer world.  
How many buds of poems may lie curled

Waiting for us to bring them to their birth,  
In hairy leaves, or this queer bestial earth,  
Or beasts with heavy lumbering rhythm, queer  
And half-amusing outline, that appear

To man not as a struggling half-awakened  
Nature like his own, by no spring slakened,—  
But as a blot of thick black darkness,—clod  
Of earth. . . . How many names we give to God!"



This is the song that little Pysche hears  
Walking through leaves like chestnut horses' ears.  
Where, in the mountain valley, gods pretend  
To dance the tarantella, condescend

To dig like peasants, play the mandoline  
At the inn's door, and tap the tambourine,—  
They take such interest in each affair. . . .  
And Darkness seems but their performing bear.

Behind the bee-hives, ruched cascades came down,  
And splashed the red and white striped poil de chèvre  
    short gown  
Of little Psyche, her skirts striped with seven  
Rows of mohair angels made in Heaven.

Like baskets of ripe fruit that hang in air  
Honeyed and yellow, seem the bird-songs where  
Among the hairy leaves fall trills of dew  
All tasting of the freshest green anew.

. . . . .  
The honey-wingèd little breeze sipped near.  
The lovely neighbours of the Silence hear  
That shepherd the young rainbow lead his flocks  
With gentle footsteps o'er the crags and rocks.

Through heavy leaves his footsteps' gilded beam  
Shone . . . apricots so ripe their kernels seem  
Gemmed amethysts,—the rose abricotine,  
And one who wears a blond lace pelerine,

The rose like the small angel Hortense, chant  
Of the white rose that first Communicant,  
So gauzy white and trembling that we see  
Her candid pure as Agnes, Virginie,

Grew round the inn. . . . There on the balustrade  
Are the nymphs' urns; the seeds of water laid  
Deep in that earth blossomed to rich carnations,  
Ranunculus and leaves bunched as Alsatians,'

Petticoats . . . and there a table rose  
Like Alps or Jupiter's great cage of snows;  
A god and goddess, vast as Apennines  
Drink pastel-placid water, tinkling wines

Like the gallantry of mandolines  
Among the crackling greenery's vast sheens. . . .  
"No rose but Jupiter's gold bees can tell  
What lovely thieves deflowered each honey-cell."

And so each little honey-wingèd breeze  
In the green dark seems Jupiter's gold bees.  
"Oh more than heavenly rose, oh lovely one,  
We seek thy gold for Death, that Solomon,

And Time, the mould from which our beauty grows,  
In which it dies. Time shapes the poem's close  
And measures our small distance to the sun  
And moments like his bee-winged motes that run.

Let us consider Beauty's earthly dress  
From life's first trance; the mineral consciousness  
Is blankness inside an invisible  
And rigid box, defined, divisible,

And separate from its sheath . . . breathe not too deep  
If you would know the mineral's trancèd sleep.  
So measure breath that you too are apart  
And are not conscious of the living heart.

But the plant seeks the light that is its lover,—  
Knows never separation between cover  
And sentience . . . the sun's heat and the dew's chill  
It knows in sleep with an undreaming thrill.

And colour breathes that is reflected light.  
The ray and perfume of the sun is white;  
But when this intermingles as in love  
With earthbound things, the dream begins to move.

Colour that sleeps as in a dreamless cloud  
Deep in the mineral's trance within its shroud,—  
This cloud then to a fluid changes, grows  
Deep in the stem and leaves of the dark rose.

The colour that was but a trancèd cloud  
Deep in the mineral, grew to music loud  
As spring within the rose; at last it ran  
Like blood within the heart of beast and man,—

The golden beasts that leap and dance like fire.  
This bestial consciousness that is desire  
Is the hot muscles' vast fluidity,  
Muscular life, not physicality.

In the hot blood of every golden beast  
We find this fiery cloud,—with it the least  
Of gilded honey-drops that heavenly lies  
Like amber in the rose's heart, then dies.

Ah, could the ruby move from trance to sleep  
It might become a rose whose perfume deep  
Grows in eternity; that radiance is  
Still unawakened by the spring light's kiss.

The rose might seek the untamed rainbow through  
The humble Eden of a drop of dew;  
Until at last in heavenly friendship grows  
The ruby and the rainbow and the rose.

This was the song she heard,—life's serenade  
There in the wineshop in the gilded glade.  
Men hearkened but this old world's black renown  
Shouted in all the gutters of the town.

Then hermit Silence came with solemn old  
Footsteps from his forest cavern cold  
And where two lion-throated fountains fell  
His voice seemed like a hermit's forest bell.



“There are vast golden solitudes of being,  
Like the deep afternoon, as golden-seeming  
As the old hermit Silence through the trees  
Or as the Hermes of Praxiteles;

Then speaks Divinity in man; the soul<sup>1</sup>  
At last knows its own solitude, the whole  
Being, from the outer world apart  
And separate, though still grown from that deep heart

We hear in growing tree and beast and song  
Of the whole earth . . . ah, where do I belong?  
This outer world is silent and hath cast  
My being from it,—in that dancing vast

Destroys my earthly body, that dark dense  
Cloud that a Divine Intelligence  
Alone creates . . . yet here must I remain,  
A golden cloud of being spoilt in vain.

This outer world, seen from existence’ brim  
Seems a vast picture, painted on the rim  
Of Space; for undeveloped man this spells  
Fear and compulsion; but the wise man tells

How fear, compulsion, are but names for wonder  
And the immortal glory of the thunder  
Speech of all the gods . . . that painted veil  
Hides Death and Life,”—so spoke that forest bell.

<sup>1</sup>See note at end of book

“The strong man dies in age; the youth that seemed  
Tall as the gods, immortal, who had dreamed  
The splendour of the noon unfading, dies  
In manhood; in his strong youth cradled lies

The child that played like a small tumbling wave  
Among the tombs of God; the forest cave  
Echoed that childish calling . . . still he strives  
To wake the spell-bound God that sleeping lies

In nature. Why then should we fear our dying,—  
Who died so many times,—who follow flying  
Feet and clasp love’s shade and cry his name,—  
But the bright love we clasp is not the same,

Since what existed yesterday must die  
To-day, that soon as dead as this must lie.  
The death of fire is but the birth of air,  
Whose bright death is the water’s birth, and here

Immortals have known change, are mortal grown,  
And mortals are immortal, by death sown,  
Living the life of mortals and then dying  
The death of the immortals,—a wave sighing

That has no fear of death through time and change.  
Come then, with the immortals we will range  
Beneath this golden shadow that once fell  
On long-dead Venus and Alaciel.”



## NOTES

Page 38. "*Where Mr. Pitt attired as Charley Wagg. . . .*" This is a reference to a famous actor of the 1840's-1860's in a favourite part. A picture of Mr. Pitt as Charley Wagg can be obtained for the sum of 2d. from Mr. Pollock's shop in Hoxton High Street. . . . There we see him in a bright blue coat, and a top-hat, a resplendent creature with bushy brown whiskers, firing a pistol through the blue distance.

Page 45. "*Yodelling Song.*" This is founded on Gertrude Stein's "Accents in Alsace" (The Watch on the Rhine) contained in her book, *Geography and Plays*:

"Sweeter than water or cream or ice. Sweeter than bells of roses. Sweeter than winter or summer or spring. Sweeter than pretty posies. Sweeter than anything is my queen and loving is her nature.

"Loving and good and delighted and best is her little King and Sire whose devotion is entire, who has but one desire to express the love which is hers to inspire.

"In the photograph the Rhine hardly showed.

"In what way do chimes remind you of singing? In what way do birds sing? In what way are forests black or white?

"We saw them blue.

"With forget-me-nots.

"In the midst of our happiness we were very pleased."

Page 66. "*Then speaks Divinity in man.*" For references contained in this and the following five quatrains see an article "Life and Death," by E. C. Merry, in the *Anthroposophical Review* for Easter, 1926.

For references contained in the six quatrains following these, see Rudolf Steiner's *Christianity as Mystical Fact*.





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